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ABSTRACT

The publication in 1990 of the School Management Task Force Report "Developing School Management--The Way Forward" was a milestone for challenging Local Education Authorities (LEA) and providers in higher education. The report stressed school-based and school-focused institutional and individual development. Changes resulting from the report's recommendations in allocation of resources for continuous professional development have facilitated a successful management development partnership between a West Midlands Comprehensive School and one of the New Universities. This paper explores the school-based and school-focused "Postgraduate Training School" involving 15 middle and senior managers. A change in government resource allocation provided schools with substantially more money for continuous professional development. In a review of the first year of a development program for middle and senior managers at Darlaston Community School in the West Midlands, all participants in the program judged it very positive and many wished to continue their training. The program improved management skills, confidence, and attitudes toward management. The concept of "Postgraduate Training Schools" has been established as a means for providing cost-effective continuing professional development for teachers. (JPT)

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School-based Management Development - Partnership in Action

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TITLE OF PAPER:

"SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT - PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION"

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"SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT - PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION"

by CORRIE GILES.

The purpose of this paper is to revisit briefly the key issues identified in the School Management Task Force Report "Developing School Management - The Way Forward" (HMSO, 1990), and to review how subsequent changes in the allocation of resources for continuous professional development have empowered a successful management development partnership between a West Midlands Comprehensive School and one of the New Universities.

The paper will explore the thinking behind this school-based and school-focused "Postgraduate Training School" initiative involving fifteen middle and senior managers; identify the changes in the marketplace which have led to the success of the partnership; outline the key features of the programme that have been implemented; provide a brief evaluation of the first year of operation, and suggest a number of lessons to consider for the future.

The Task Force Report

The publication of the School Management Task Force Report was a considerable milestone for those concerned professionally with management development in schools, and challenged much of the existing thinking and practice of Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and providers in Higher Education. The Report made a number of broad recommendations aimed at making more cost-effective use of limited resources; encouraging the sharing of professional expertise; creating more sharply defined training opportunities, and broadening professional perspectives by improving access. However, the key recommendation was the need to radically review the nature, style and approach of existing provision with the proposed change of focus in management development as outlined in Table One. There was a need to move away from a service-wide cascade model of delivery towards a more appropriate approach which supports school-based and school-focused institutional (and individual) development. Such an approach entailed:

(a) a philosophy of entitlement to development for all school managers;

(b) a recognition of the value of planning the systematic development of managers and management practice as a means of supporting the school and its development;

(c) a need for a more coherent and structured identification of personal and organisational needs;

(d) a closer on-site working relationship between individual schools and providers.

CURRENT EMPHASIS	REDIRECTED EMPHASIS
Tutor-directed courses.	Support for self-directed study by individuals, school teams, peer groups.
Off-site training.	In-school and near-to-school training.
Predetermined times.	Flexitime study.
Oral presentations.	Distance-learning materials, information packs and projects.
Provider-determined syllabus.	School-determined agenda.
Knowledge acquisition.	Performance enhancement.

Table One: (Source: School Management Task Force, 1990)

Changes in Resource Allocation

Although no clear blue-print for action was provided by The Task Force, implementation of the recommendations has been encouraged by changes in the Government funding of INSET which has become ever more closely linked to national priorities through the LEA administered Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programme. Local Education Authorities have also been required by Government to delegate a higher percentage of centrally-retained funds to schools through the Local Management of Schools (LMS) formula. As a result of these changes, schools have received a substantial increase in resources to spend on continuous professional development. Unfortunately much of this funding is no longer received on an ear-marked budget head, and schools are in effect free to vire funds to other priorities rather than invest in management development if they so wish.

New Realities of the Marketplace

Those schools that are in a position to retain an INSET budget have started to recognise the potential of being able to plan and purchase appropriate cost-effective provision to meet their needs. This opportunity will be further enhanced in the 1993 Education Bill, if all the proposals of the 1992 White Paper "Choice and Diversity" become law this year. Under these proposals, schools that opt for Grant-Maintained School (GMS) status will be able to formalise cluster arrangements which could provide, amongst other things, more resources for management development. However, at present it is still proving difficult for individual schools to avoid disadvantages inherent in much of the existing provision, many of which were highlighted in the Report.

A Professional Response

The combination of delegated funding for continuous professional development, the introduction of schemes of staff appraisal, the complexity and extent of change currently being managed by schools in the aftermath of the 1988 Education Reform Act, and the lack of staff movement restricting career opportunities have produced a complex web of management development needs. This suggests an opportunity, and considerable challenge, for providers in higher education wishing to engage in a process of product development in partnership with schools which will also encourage investment in management development at a time of severe resource shortage.

The opportunity to pilot a school-based and school-focused management development initiative presented itself in the form of Darlaston Community School in the West Midlands.

A Practical Way Forward

Darlaston is an 11 - 18 school of 1150 pupils and 78 teaching staff. Originally built in the 1960's as a purpose-built grammar school with a selective intake, it has been transformed into a successful comprehensive school with significant links with local businesses and community user groups. The school is located in a traditional industrial part of Walsall LEA that has suffered considerably in the present economic climate. Some 30% of the school population belong to an ethnic minority who considerably enrich the curriculum on offer. The school is well managed, has a stable and long-serving staff, and has, through persistent hard work, earned the respect and support of the Governing Body during a period of considerable change and innovative reform. As a result, the school has an excellent reputation in the community for providing a safe and caring learning environment for its pupils. The senior management team felt that progress over the previous five years had been excellent, and that as management structures and responsibilities were to be reviewed over the next two year period, the time was right to invest in a development programme for middle and senior managers. This view was supported by staff INSET returns which expressed professional development needs that could be appropriately located in a management development programme.

Programme Development

Programme development moved swiftly as the school had a clear agenda that needed to be fulfilled if it were to invest scarce resources in a large-scale staff development initiative. The programme had to be coherent and rigorous, and offer continuity of learning, and access to accreditation at various levels for those requiring additional qualifications for career purposes. The programme also had to be held at times that ensured access without incurring supply cover costs or time-consuming travel. Cost was of course crucial, but the most significant factor identified by the Senior Management and Staff was the relevance of any programme to their needs, and ultimately the quality of

teaching and learning taking place in the school.

Within normal constraints of staffing, timetabling and fees, Darlaston School negotiated a three-phase management development programme that was cost-effective, largely took place on the school premises and required no supply teacher cover. The programme recruited eighteen members of the middle and senior management. The three phases consisted of:

Phase A which began with a residential weekend at the University with the theme "Personal and Organisational Change". The purpose of the weekend was to provide an opportunity for reflection and a structured review of the development needs of individuals and the school. Course members were also able to follow a programme which clarified the nature and purpose of management; explored the changing management context of the 1990's to provide a system overview, and examined change theory as a basis for understanding management as a process activity. The weekend provided tutors with an opportunity to learn about the school in detail, and to draw directly from the working life of the school and staff to structure course materials and practical work. There was also considerable opportunity to build group identity and establish a good relationship with the group tutor responsible for academic and pastoral care.

Phase A continued with a 25 week foundation programme of one night a week on the school premises, starting with tutorials between 4.30 and 5.30pm and tutor-guided session from 5.30 - 8.30 pm. The programme began in October 1992 and ended in June 1993. School half-term breaks which do not occur in a University academic year were accommodated. A range of management issues were considered including marketing, resource management, management processes and human resource management. Assessment for those wishing accreditation was based on an appropriate assessable outcome equivalent to one 2,500 word and two 5,000 word assignments. Assessments were negotiated, reflected personal and organisational needs, and required application of theory to practice with a clear focus on management issues in the school. Phase A ended with a diagnostic module which was intended to review the extent to which the programme had met personal and organisational needs, and how best these may be accommodated in Phase B. Successful course members could withdraw at this stage and receive a Postgraduate Certificate in Education Management.

Phase B will consist of five electives from a choice of twelve course modules, each of five weeks duration beginning in September 1993. Appropriate school or group modules could have been negotiated and substituted if required, although this was not necessary as there was complete agreement between course members and senior management. Individual preferences could also have been accommodated at other outposts served by the University, or through distance learning packages. Some members of the group were also eligible for release from certain modules through the University Accreditation of Prior Learning process.

For those requiring accreditation, assessment of Phase B is

similar to Phase A and is the equivalent of one 5,000 word assignment and three 2,500 word assignments. Successful course members will receive a Postgraduate Diploma in Education Management at the end of Phase B and withdraw from the programme if they so wish.

Phase C will mark the beginning of the individual "Management Study" phase successful members of the group who so wish proceed to complete an MSc in Education Management. The Phase begins with a five week research methods course specific to education management and appropriate for conducting small-scale research. Course members will be allocated individual tutors to guide them through their school-focused research which could consist of an individual management study or or specially commissioned projects from their own Senior Management Team.

Evaluation of the First Year

Course evaluation of Phase A has been very positive, with fifteen of the original eighteen course members remaining with the programme. All fifteen have indicated a wish to gain either a Postgraduate Diploma or MSc in Education Management. Relevance, content and presentation all scored an average of five on a six point evaluation scale, which indicates a high degree of satisfaction with the programme. The Foundation Weekend received particular comment for being both enjoyable and informative. Tutorial support was also singled out as being supportive, helpful and informative. A genuine feeling of a growing partnership emerged from the evaluations, both in terms of the University and School, but also between the group members, regardless of seniority.

In terms of the ten key objectives identified in The Task Force Report (p14), better management is being actively promoted at Darlaston and has made a noticeable impact which will be the focus of more detailed research by Crewe and Alsager Faculty. Senior Management report a noticeable increase in confidence and management competence from amongst course members. Attitudes towards management and management development are now more positive as understanding informs better practice. Learning taking place in the school, about the school, is quickly assimilated and applied to current management problems as the school year unfolds. Access to training has certainly improved with timing and location sensitive to the needs of busy teachers. Staff who would not normally have participated in an LEA or University package are enthusiastically engaged in this programme because it is convenient and relevant to their needs. The quality of provision is under immediate scrutiny and action to resolve any difficulties facilitated by a system of group tutor/school liaison. Individual development is aided by diagnosis of need, flexibility in assessment, and relevance of exemplar material used in learning situations appropriate for adult learners. The school cohort is also a powerful source of knowledge, skills and expertise that can be skilfully utilised by tutors to enhance learning and the mutual understanding and support of colleagues.

Lessons for the Future

Both the University and Darlaston School are pleased with the success of the programme and the speed at which the initiative has become established and integrated into the normal day-to-day routine of the school. Much of this success has been due to the building of a genuine equal partnership, underlined by ease of access, approachability and open and frank discussions about progress. Liaison has been crucial in arranging induction meetings for new tutors and creating regular opportunities to visit and see the school at work. Particular care has been taken to share expectations, to address pastoral as well as academic issues and to create as far as possible a professional learning environment on the school premises.

A number of lessons for the future are indicated in the course evaluations, although suggestions vary considerably, and are to some extent related to an individuals management experience and management position in the school. Personality issues are also, as ever an issue, and it is difficult at times to untangle whether it is the tutor or the programme that is being evaluated! Nevertheless there are sufficient recurring themes for the course team to consider:

* how is the University and school going to more systematically act upon personal and organisational needs identified at the start of the programme, and know when these needs have been met? Is there a danger that the lure of accreditation detracts from targeting personal and organisational development?

* can the role of the group tutor and school staff development officer be co-ordinated so that the flexibility of the programme is used to target more accurately development requirements through assessments, tutorials and learning activities which support and enhance performance?

* are tutors continually examining the most appropriate delivery mechanisms for adult learners at very different stages in their careers, or is there an opportunity to use more "action learning" or school centred "project approaches"?

* is full opportunity being made to increasing the relevance of exemplars given during the programme by more frequently relating learning activities and theory to personal experience and "real" management issues in the school? Do tutors "know" the school as thoroughly as they should? Is there scope for reducing the number of tutors that work with school based cohorts so as to improve overall knowledge and understanding of that particular management context?

* is there scope for establishing a school as well as University process for monitoring and evaluating effectiveness in the workplace? How does the school know that it has invested wisely?

* would it be useful to implement brief termly meetings with the Senior Management Team in the school to more equitably share the

responsibility for developing the capacity of individual managers to manage? Would such meetings be a useful forum for identifying in advance key management issues facing the school in the immediate future which tutors may then wish to incorporate in learning situations?

Conclusion

The concept of a "Postgraduate Training Schools" has thus been established, which seems to offer some ways forward in the provision of cost-effective continuing professional development for serving teachers. The initiative is broadly in line with the philosophy of the Task Force Report and is clearly relevant to individual schools or clusters seeking to use staff development funding in a more imaginative way. The stress on trying to meet both the development needs of a school as well as those of individual teachers, and the provision of a coherent, rigorous, accredited programme seems to have established the basis of what is proving to be a mutually beneficial partnership.

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